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THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2016

New college centre goes high-tech



Architect Steve Done from Architects Tillmann Ruth Robinson gives a media tour of the Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre at Niagara College's Welland campus last week.



Sitel adding 250 St. Catharines jobs

Postmedia Network

Sitel is hiring 250 full-time workers at its St. Catharines call centre *This is actually the result of

great performance for existing clients we have," said Glenn McCormack, director at the Ontario Street site that currently employs 850 people. The clients we're doing

business with ... are very pleased with the work being performed out of the site, and they're offering additional work," McCormack said. "And so that requires additional employees

The jobs are all in-bound, customer care work for clients in the telecommunications industry. McCormack said the hir-

ing spurt started about three weeks ago and ends at the end of April In a release, Sitel noted it has been in the Garden City for 15 years. It celebrated that anniversary last Monday. "In the 15 years we've been in St. Catharines, aside from

the initial startup, this is one of the biggest jumps that we've had," McCormack said. Expansion is "always a pos-sibility," he added. "We've talked about where the clients want to go and the amount of

work they want to give to us. "And as far as the site is concerned, we're looking at the configuration to see if we can engineer a way to add additional seats so we can take on more business.

McCormack said the basic starting rate is \$11.75 an hour, plus bonuses and shift premiums. The average employee at the site is making \$13.50 to \$14 an hour. Sitel also offers a full benefits package.

"Many of the Sitel manage ment and the support staff are



The Sitel call centre based on Ontario Street in St. Catharines is looking to expand its workforce by about 250 positions.

promoted from within, Very rarely do we go outside for any of these positions," he said. "As we grow, these oppor-

tunities become more abundent* City of St. Catharines economic development manager from Sitel, year after year,"

Brian York said the hiring is "We continue to see growth

"And there's a strong commitment from that company to hire and train their workers (and promote) them into management. That's very rewarding for both the employees and the commu-

and we hear them validate the story of 'I started at the floor, now I'm in a management role and this is a great company to work for. Sitel said people who are interested in available positions

Previous customer service experience and strong computer knowledge are pre-

Twitter: @don standard

LifeLabs to close Thorold facility with loss of more than 50 jobs

Postmedia Network

The LifeLabs testing facility in Thorold, which employs more than 50 people, is clos-

In addition to the closure, the company confirmed Friday that two St. Catharines locations will be consoli-

dated. The medical laboratory company announced in an open letter last week that facilities in Thorold, London and Ottawa, where patient samples are analyzed, will close. along with the consolidation of 15 patient service centres.

LifeLabs chief executive officer Sue Paish attributed the changes to the company's ongoing efforts to find efficiencies despite increasing patient volumes and costs, and cutbacks in government "We're constantly reallo-

cating our services to where needs of the patients are the greatest, taking a look at demographics, taking a look at patient volumes and workflows," she said Friday. "Sometimes that includes consolidation of services, sometimes closure of services

It was determined work completed at the Thorold lab set to close May 15 - could be "transferred and consolidated into our GTA lab without compromising quality. without compromising test turnamund times for natients

and physicians," Paish said. "We don't expect any impact on patients in terms access to services or the quality of the tests they receive."

The closure will mean the loss of 55 jobs in Thorold however, some positions will he relocated The workforce within the

GTA labs will be increased by about 20 jobs, Paish said, with Thorold staff given priority for the positions "We're working with each one of the staff members individually to see if there's a posi-

tion whether in a GTA facility or somewhere else in Life-Labs, that can work for them." she said. "What we're trying to do is

make sure we place as many of those people as we possibly can * Thorold chief administra-

tive officer Frank Pabiano said news of the closure, learned through the same publiclyissued letter, caught city hall

*There was no correspondence whatsoever," he said. expressing his disappointment

He called the loss of more than 50 jobs "detrimental" to both the city and the region. After learning the news, city staff immediately made contact with LifeLabs, but no definitive reason for the closure was provided.

Fabiano hopes to learn more detail when both he and Niagara Region economic development staff speak with Paish and company board members next week.

Since the announcement Fabiano has spoken with some of the facility's employees, who are "very upset."

"Some of them were only a few years from retirement. It's very hard on them." Bob Seguin, Niagara Region's economic development director, called news of the closure concerning.

great, fantastic news."

"They are good paying jobs and also in the life sciences area, where the Region would like to see further economic opportunities," he said. He hopes to learn more

about the rationale behind the closure, as well as measures that will be taken by the company to assist impacted employees during next week's LifeLabs patient service

centres, where people provide blood and urine samples. are also being consolidated to find efficiencies. The centre at 180 Vine St.

will be merged April 9 into the building at 145 Queenston St.

Catharines and Niagara Falls locations will not be mfirth@postmedia.com Twitter: @mfirthStandard

York said the city has a longstanding relationship with company management

may apply at the "Careers" tab of www sitel com-

donfraser@postmedia.com

A province-wide facilities

review was conducted and

15 centres located near other

Life I she facilities were elated

The two impacted St.

Paish could not confirm

whether the local merger

would result in any job loss.

saving consolidation in some

cases will result in expanded

being customized to make

sure we're meeting the needs

The remaining St.

of the community," she said.

"Each (consolidation) is

Catharines sites are about two

for closure. Paish said.

kilometres apart.

staffing and hours.

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LOCALNEWS

Nicholson calls for national dementia strategy

Postmedia Network

Dementia does not discriminate between political

criminate between pointical parties.

A private member's bill introduced by Niagara Falls Conservative MP Rob Nicholson, seconded by Don Valley West Liberal MP Rob Oliphant calling on a national dementia strategy is being halled as a bipartisan achievement.

More than 700,000 Canadians currently suffer from Alzhelmer's and other related dementias. It is expected to affect 1.4 million Canadians in 15 years and will cost \$293 billion a year by 2040. "It calls on the prov-

"It calls on the provinces and all stakeholders to develop a plan to co-operate in finding a cure and dealing with the challenges of Alzheimer's disease and other

he introduced Bill C-233 for the first time.

He also credited former Nickel Belt NDP MP Claude

Nickel Belt NDP MP Claude Gravelle for raising the issue in the past. "There is probably no family in the country that can

say it has not in some way been hurt by these particular diseases. We know they are increasing. "As we know, as the population increases, the word is that

this is going to increase."

The bill could be up for a second reading vote in the next few weeks, he told Postmedia Network.

Nicholson said his father died from Alzheimer's dis-

ease in 1997 and he regularly hears about cases in his community. "I'm quite familiar with the disease," he said. "There's no.

real national strategy with respect to Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. This is a good way to raise awareness and increase the level of support and agreement on

this issue."

The bill has the support of a number of stakeholders, particularly the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

The society described the bill as a positive step towards curbing the social, economical and personal costs of a disease that still has no cure or effective treatment.

"We're thrilled that parties are working together so soon after the election to address the urgency of dementia," said Mimi Lowi-Young, the society's chief executive officer. "We all need to get behind

this bill. We strongly believe that a national dementia strategy that focuses on research,



Niagara Falls Conservative MP Rob Nicholson, pictured, and Liberal MP Rob Oliphant are coming together on a bipartisan bill to combat Alzheimer's and dementia.

prevention and improved care is the only solution to tackling the devastating impact of this disease."

disease."

Lowi-Young said the society is ready to collaborate with federal, provincial and territorial partners to "make this a

According to society research, 83 per cent of Canadians bave said they want a national dementia strategy.

The society is asking the government to create a Canadian Alzheimer's Dis-

ease and Dementia Parinership that would bring together researchers, cliniclans, health-care providers and private industry to work alongside Canadians impacted by the disease to develop and implement the stratery.

Nicholson said there's no simple solution, but politicians and stakeholders can 'bring as much publicity to this as possible.' He said the administration and delivery of health care services is the responsibility of each province and territory. But he hopes a national strategy would see provinces and territories work even more collaboratively and lead to less duplication in strategies and strategies and the strategies and the functional strategy and the strategies and the functional strategies and strategies and strategies and studies and strategies and strategi

> rspiteri@postmedia.com Twitter: @RaySpiteri



March 17th 3:30pm-5:00pm

Celebrate St. Patricks Day with our Green Beer Pub and entertainment by Maggie Vida

March 24th 2:00pm-3:00pm
Spend a "cr"afternoon with us making an Easter themed craft

March 29th 2:00pm-3:00pm
Protect your wealth with tips you will learn from financial experts at our educational seminar

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COMMENT

Published by PelhamNEWS, Postmedia Corp. 228 East Main St., Welland, ON L3B 5P5 Tel: 905-732-2414 ext 246 Fax: 905-732-3660 e-mail: welland.tribune@sunmeda.ca John Tobon, GROUP ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Peter Conradi, www.evs.storce

Pelham three-peats in water services

am thrilled that council is set to approve am thrilled that council is see to appear another freeze on our residential and commercial water and waste water rates. Because of ongoing efficiencies and innovations, the town will absorb the Region's 3.2

per cent water rate increase and 1.8 per cent vaste water increase. How are we able to freeze rates for 2016.

and how do we compare to others in Niagara? RF meters paying dividends

Prior to 2010, the town measured water usage and calculated waste water charges with old gallon and cubic metre odometertype wheel meters - many from the 1960s and 1970s. Many of the aged meters counted slowly or were failing or broken. It took two

weeks to collect readings. If a system leaked, it could take months to detect.

In 2010, the town worked with Neptune Technology to replace and upgrade all 4,200 of our meters to electronic, RF (Radio Frequency) meters. In addition to leak, backflow and tamper detection, it only takes three to four hours for staff to collect usage data every two months.

Not only does this cost less and give much more accurate billing, we also automatically notify residents and businesses by phone if there is a leak or other issue with their water service. And after replacing all the meters, we reduced our water loss from 20 per cent to less than 10 per cent.

Infrastructure upgrades As you know, we have also upgraded significant town infrastructure over the past several years. As we reconstructed or improved roads like Haist Street. Pelham Street and Canboro Road we also replaced old water and sewer pipes. Over the past nine years, we replaced more than 13 kilometres of cast iron water mains, which helped stop costly leaks and reduce the

Best in Niagara

number of breaks and repairs.

I reviewed the most up-to-date rates and calculated the fixed charges and rates for both water and waste water for Pelham and for the other local municipalities. At \$161 for two months (for the average residential use of 50 cubic metres). Pelham leads the pack with the lowest combined water and waste water

Half of our neighbours — Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Thorold and West Lincoln - are between 19 and 29 per cent more expensive. The others - Fort Erie, Lincoln, Port Colborne and Welland are more than 49 per cent more expensive. (Please see the comparative chart at www. pelhammayordaye,blogspot.ca for all the details)

Council and I are pleased that our investments in innovation and infrastructure continue to nay dividends and allow us to "threepeat" the water and sewer rate freeze.

You can contact Mayor Dave Augustyn at mayordaye® pelham.ca or read past columns at www.pelhammayordaye. mco.fogsgold

MPs should get by with less like the rest of us

→ ormer prime minister Pierre Trudeau famously once said something to the effect that all backbench members of parliament, once they walk one block from Parliament Hill, are a bunch of nobodies.

Maybe so. How many backbenchers can you name, other than the ones from Niagara? But they are our nobodies, and we pay a fair bit of money to keep them in business.

The base salary for an MP these days is \$167.400 - which in many cases, is more than that person has ever earned before. Granted, the job takes them away from home for long periods and keeps them busy while they are in their home riding. But a paycheque like that makes up for a fair bit of work stress But that's not the total of what we spend on

our parliamentary members. This month, it was learned that after a five-year freeze, the allowances MPs receive

to run their offices will be going up in April - by a lot. Since 2010, each MP has been allotted \$288,450 per year. Next month, that will go up

by an additional \$58,000 per year. That money goes toward the cost of maintaining at least two offices (in their home riding and in Ottawa), employee salaries, service contracts, travel costs and other

So basically, it costs us about a half-million dollars per year, per MP.

But at some point there has to be a line where we say: No more. With apologies to our local MPs current and former, there is some truth to Trudeau's

A backbencher's travel should largely, if not completely, be confined to trips to and



MPs are scheduled to receive an increase in their allowances next month.

from his or her riding. Their office is meant to be small and while employees deserve the occasional raise like anyone else, the number of employees should be kept to a minimum

This week, via an article by Postmedia Network reporter Ray Spiteri, we heard two

takes on that First, St. Catharines Liberal MP Chris Bittle

said "it's our job to serve our constituencies and to do it as best we can." Fair enough. But a representative for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation retorted: "I think that in this environment we are in fiscally, it will leave a bad taste in the mouths of a lot of Canadians ... and at a time that we're going to be running possibly a \$30-million deficit."

What makes the allowance increase hard to swallow is that the decision was made way back in December, but only quietly revealed publicly late last month. And the only time many people have contact with their MP is through the endless stream of mailings that clutter up our mailboxes. Times are tight. If MPs need to make do

with a little less - well, join the club.

Questions flood in at Welland River sessions

WAYNE CAMPBELL

Special to Postmedia Network More than 600 neighbours of the Welland River flowed into four town hall

meetings last month to learn about a flood plain mapping project. They left many questions on display boards but received few immediate

They asked about the effects of lines - showing potential flood water flow in a major storm - on development. insurance, farming, property values and

building replacement. The answers come later, said Andrea Bourrie, a consultant working with Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, during a town hall meeting of 175 people in Wellandport last week, the last in a series of meetings that were also held in Chippawa, Welland and Caistor Centre. Bourrie said consultants gathered

information and raised awareness about the floodplain mapping process. NPCA had sent letters promoting the meetings to 5,000 residents living within 500 metres of the Welland River from the

Binbrook Dam to the Niagara River at

Still ahead are two more rounds; a technical round in April and presentations of findings in the fall.

Provincial legislation governing conservation authorities requires maps of potential flood areas during a major storm. Bourrie said. Construction in those areas would be

prohibited or restricted to protect residents and property. The existing Welland River floodplain

plan lines were drawn in 1985. In 2010. NPCA tried to update those nes with current information but

dropped the project because it failed to consult residents along the river The consultant's report this fall will contain flood lines using current technology and resident information. It will include development and other restric-

tions to limit flooding damage. Answers to residents' questions submitted at last month's meetings will be in the final report and background mate-

rial said Rourrie At the Wellandport Community Cen-

tre residents from West Lincoln, Welland, Wainfleet and Pelham

threw out many questions and David Honey of the Niagara Land Owners Association warned homeowners against signing any-

thing, calling a 500-metre area on maps a legal encumbrance on their property

NPCA could potentially face a class action lawsuit from the 5,000 residents affected, he said.

A federation of agriculture representative wanted to know if the flood lines would interfere with normal farming practices. An insurance agent said he has been receiving inquiries from clients along the river about their policies and was not sure how to

A homeowner asked about compensation, if his home suddenly fell within the new floodplain lines.

There were questions about Ontario Power Generation's influence on the back flow of the Welland River from its hydro canal on the Niagara River. NPCA's earlier town hall meet-

ings each drew about 150 people. NPCA executive director Carmen D'Angelo said "we are very pleased that with the four primary town hall meetings there was good attendance and many of the participants provided feedback by verbal questions and comments one-to-one discussions, comment cards and e-mails."

The second set of meetings. he said, will focus on technical aspects so

that the public and stake. holders "will have an understanding how we will create the floodplain

CADMEN

The third set will disclose the findings that will be presented to the NPCA board of directors for approval

This will be conducted concurrently with an update on policy associated with the maps," D'Angelo said.

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Merritt Park concert lineup announced

ALLAN BENNER

Postmedia Network The music of the Beatles, the Eagles, Janis Joplin and other iconic performers will ring through downtown Welland this

Less than a week after being awarded the city's contract to run an admissionfree summer concert series at the Merritt Park amphitheatre, volunteer concert organizers Don Romano and Ralph Belvedere are already finalizing the lineup of shows planned for the floating stage.

"Everybody's enthusiastic about this. They've seen our lineup, and they think it's fantastic," Belvedere said, "So do we."

There will be no alcohol sales during the concerts. The shows start June 24 when The Caverners perform the music of the Beatles, with the team of Aiden Payne

and Autumn Conrad starting the show. Belvedere and Romano have teamed up with the Welland library and museum to organize a children's day in the park that will feature Splash N Boots on Sat-

urday, July 2. Nick Adams, as Splash, and Taes Leavitt, as Boots, are Juno-nominated award-winning Canadian chil-

dren's performers "They're big, big with the kids," he said.

With the younger audience in mind. that show will take place during the day starting at 11 a.m.

Concerts for grown-ups resume a week later, when Mad Dogs and Englishmen, a tribute to Joe Cocker and Leon Russell, perform.

One show in particular the concert organizers are eager to see is a tribute to the Woodstock Music and Art Fair, taking place July 15. Krista Blondin will be among musicians participating in the Woodstock night, performing her Joplin tribute. There will be a strong focus on local talent in this year's concert series as well, with performers including Jessica Wilson, Ashlynne Vince, Heather Glabb, Kindred, the Sunset Rebels and New Kid in Town, performing the music of the Eagles as the summer continues.



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Regional meetings streamed on web

Postmedia Network

The debates and decisions of regional council can now be seen by residents in real time without setting foot in council chambers.

The websites of the St. Catharines Standard, Niagara Falls Review and Welland Tribune, which have been regularly live streaming regional council meetings for some time, will this week begin streaming standing committee meetings newoll

The newspapers will do so through use of feeds provided by Niagara Region

The Region has been live streaming its council meetings since completion of chamber renovations in April 2014. Standing committees followed in February 2015.

Public response has been positive as attempts are made to leverage the new technology available at the headquarters. manager of client and support

services Steve Biletchi said. Past viewership has varied from meeting to meeting, with some drawing a few hundreds people and others only dozens. "It all depends on the topic being discussed." Region communications specialist Daryl Barnhart said, adding conten-

tious issues and public delegations on hot topics tend to draw more interest The benefit of streaming does not end once the live feed The Region archives each

recorded meeting through its YouTube channel for the public, staff and councillors to

"A lot of people watch on demand on their own time Bambart said

"Whether there are 10 people watching or 1,000, it's a benefit to live stream!

The videos provide an opportunity for staff and council to catch up on issues discussed during meetings they were unable to attend. The Region, however, does

not yet have the ability to webcast all of its meetings. That is due in part to staff resources, given the considerable number of subcommittees but also due to snace con-

straints, deputy clerk Natasha Council chambers is the only room technologically equipped for the service

Attempts to hold all meetings in that space would ultimately lead to scheduling conflicts, she said

Council meetings, standing committees, budget review and business planning council sessions, as well as some meetings of the Burgovne Bridge replacement project task force, have made it to the web The service, Barnhart said,

speaks to council's commitments to being open and trans-

Archived videos are available at www.niagararegion.ca/government/council/all-councilvideos asmx



Catherine Habermebl, director of waste management services for Niagara Region, was one of three guest speakers at Putting Waste in its Place, an educational seminar hosted by Niagara Sustainability Initiative in St. Catharines,

New act could mean waste changes

MARYANNE FIRTH Postmedia Network

Changes could be coming to the way waste is handled in

The Waste-Free Ontario Act is moving through the legislative process and could soon introduce waste diversion strategies across the province. Catherine Habermehl called

it a much-needed move for the province as she spoke to a room of more than 30 inquiring minds from the public and private sector at Best Western in St. Cathorines lost Tuesday The director of waste man. agement services for Niagara Region was one of three guest speakers at Putting Waste in its Place, an educational seminar hosted by Niagara Sus-

tainability Initiative. 'We need this Our diversion rates are stagnant." Habermebl said of Bill 151, which has the potential to be passed before the year is out. Ontario's overall diversion rate sits at 47 per cent.

Despite ongoing efforts

materials, Habermebi said. "That's where we need to focus our attention, not just in

Niagara, but across Ontario.5 The proposed legislation, which recently had its second reading, "intends to shift to a circular economy" that further emphasizes reducing, reusing and recycling, she said. While it's unknown at this point what role municipalities

will play under the new act. substantial changes are likely "Municipalities may not be in this business anymore." Habermebl said, adding the responsibility of curbside pickup and waste processing could be transitioned into the hands of the private sector. The act, to be introduced

over several years, will shift the cost of waste diversion from municipalities to producers, and from taxpayers to consumers. Producers, Habermebl said,

will be responsible for the cost of diverting or disposing of packaging and products at the end of their lifespan. The focus will include electronics, tires, hazardous waste

and blue box materials The change is intended

to drive businesses to create products that last longer. are reusable and more easily recycled.

The industrial, commercial and institutional sector has been largely ignored when it comes to waste diversion strategies, Habermebl said, calling the gap a "huge opportunity" to improve environmental impact within the

She believes more programs and incentives should be available to assist these organizations in creating successful diversion methods an approach Niagara Region is looking into To give public and pri-

vate-sector representatives an idea of how to introduce waste diversion strategies in the workplace, Victoria Brzozowski outlined how her team was able to create change at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. The sustainability and

waste program co-ordinator said that success did not come without challenges, but gave tips for overcoming obstacles that organizations may encounter It begins with the creation

waste diversion and then con tinues on with consistent education and engagement, Brzo-

The program at St. Joseph's targeted improvement in recycling, transitioning to reproc essable items and introducing a communications campaign to get the word out to staff, patients and visitors. St Joseph's has improved to a 48 per cent diversion rate this

year from a 37 per cent diversion rate in 2013. To give insight on how to assess waste management at an organization, Niagara College sustainability co-ordinator Taryn Wilkinson provided the audience with a brief overview of how to conduct a waste audit, Workshops offering more detailed advice will be set up through NSI at a later date, she said

Organizations interested in creating a waste management nian can contact Niamara Suc. tainability Initiative for guidance. For more information, visit niagarasustainability.org.

> mfirth@oostmedia.com Twitter: @mfirthStandard









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* RECREATION PROGRAMS & CLASS

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Town of Pelham website to let us know how we

Public Skating Adult Public Skating Sunday, Mar 13 (1:00-2:20 pm) Mar 14 to Mar 18

12:00-1:00 pm

Tuesday, Mar 15 (4:00-5:00 pm) Friday, Mar 18 (7:30-8:30 pm)

Thursday, Mar 17 No Skate Parent/Preschool

Tuesday, Mar 15 1:00-2:00 pm Friday, Mar 18 10:00-11:00 am

Skate Monday, Mar 14 1:00-2:00 pm Contact Julie Cook at icook@pelham.ca or 905-892-2607 ext. 329 for details

Adult Learn to

Hockey Tuesday, Mar 8:00-9:00 am Friday, Mar 18 9:00-10:00 am

Men's Shinny

Women's Shinny Hockey Monday, Mar 14 9:30-10:45 am Thursday, Mar 17 10:30-11:45 am

Women's Learn to Play Hockey Thursday, Mar 17 9:30-10:30 am

Hockey Skills Hour Monday, Mar 14 11:00-12:00 pm Thursday, Mar 17 2:00-3:00 pm

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er at tcookepelham.ca or 905 892-2607 ext, 329.



The Town's Active Transportation Committee is developing a long-term plan to improve active transportation and recreation throughout Pelham. Please take a moment to share your thoughts, opinions, questions and suggestions by visiting

communityremarks.com/Pelham.



JOHN OUR TEAM

We're hiring a Grounds Maintenance Attendant, Apply online at pelham.ca/careeropportunities by Monday, March 14, 2016.

LOCALNEWS

College centre manufacturing centre nearing completion

Niagara College is prepar ing to open its 15,000-squarefoot Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, scheduled for completion this

The new building will specialize in advanced manufacturing, such as 3D scanning and printing, and will house the college's research and innovation division. "What the building means

to us is an expansion of the operations that we currently have," said centre manager lames Lambert, "We have been engaging industry now for more than two years and using advanced manufacturing technologies to make SMEs (small- and mediumsized enterprise) in the area more competitive in the marketplace."

Student employees and faculty work in the research and innovation division on projects with industry partners and provide services



IXI IXENAN/POSTNEDIA NETRICRIX Workers are seen during a media tour of the Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation centre

at Niagara College. such as producing and testsmall and medium sized busiing prototypes, looking at new

The advanced manufacturing side has really outgrown

its current space, said Marc Nantel, associate vice-president of research and innova-



Marc Nantel, associate vice president of research and innovation, shows current labs in the Rankin Technology Centre during a media tour of the Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation centre at Niagara College

"It was about five years ago competitive, all wanting to that we started in earnest to be innovative and entreprelook at advanced manufacneurial, and sometimes just turing as a way to help induslooking for a little bit of help." try on the research and inno-Lambert said vation front." Nantel said. The new building is space "And we secured one lab at for the programs to grow into. with several labs, offices, confirst in the Rankin technol-

ference rooms and flexible labs that can be rented out by companies. "It's going to be a gamechanger for us," Nantel said. What we try to do is have

great professional development for our teachers, great education for our students and great new products for our industry partners:

Ground broke on the Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre in March, 2015. The province invested \$4.2 million towards the building and the Walker family and Walker Industries Holdings Ltd. contributed \$1.2 million.



the ruins are these small- and medium-sized enterprise all providing value to the supply chain, all wanting to be When the electricity fails...

ogy building - it's the lab

with all the equipment -

but it became too small, so

then we secured the other lab

but it also again became too small because there's a lot of

Both Nantel and Lambert

said that manufacturing in

Niagara has changed, but it's

"Manufacturing in Niagara,

in the region, is still very much

alive. It doesn't look the same

as it did 15 to 20 years ago,

but what has risen up from

demand*

still here

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City hopes to open north Welland to development

ALLAN BENNER

After years of watching in frustration as neighbouring properties in Pelham and Thorold have been developed for big-priced homes, the owners of hundreds of acres in northwest Welland

might soon be able to develop their land, too. Urban area boundaries of Pelham and Thorold extend to Welland's border, allowing developments to proceed in those communities, but more

than 190 hectares of adjacent land on the south side of the municipal border cannot be developed.

That property falls outside

Welland's urban area boundary.
"It's frustrating to see Fonthill taking advantage of that area and developing it, and Welland can't," said Ward I Coun. Mark Carl, who represents most of the

residents in the area.

"It's a great area that has potential for homes to be developed. And to me, it's unfair that Fonthill can build housing and collect taxes right to the Welland border, and Welland can use

that land to develop and have people living there and collect taxes."

taxes."

The issue has been frustrating for landowners, too.

Carl said an angry property owner put up signs at the corner of First Avenue and Ouaker.

Road a few years ago, protesting being unable to build. "He was adamant that he wanted to build houses there, and he wasn't allowed." Carl

said.

Ward 4 Coun. Pat Chiocchio
said he has spoken to many frustrated property owners he represents in the area, too, who have
been waiting for many years to
develop their property.

But it's an inequity he hopes

Niagam Region will change. Earlier this week, Welland city council approved a report asking Niagama Region to expand the city's urban area boundary to include the land at the city's northwest border. And councillors as well as planning staff are optimistic that this time, the land many finally become open

for development.
"I've been waiting for a long time for this," Chlocchio said. Rose DiFelice, manager of

Welland's planning department, said it has been at least a decade since the city began working towards expanding its urban boundary in the area.

boundary in the area. She said Welland commissioned studies dating back to 2005 in the bope of allowing development to take place. But at the time, the cost of extending services to the area was prohibitive, and the region was considering the area as the location for the development of a mid-

peninsula highway.
In 2010, during the development of a new official plan for the city, a study indicated that Welland had enough developable lend to last 32 years.
But things have changed in the years since those stud-

But things have changed in the years since those studies were completed. Municipal services have been gradually extended to Welland's border from Pelham and Thorold, and the location has since been deemed not suitable for a new highway.

highway.

The Region is conducting a municipal comprehensive review, and as part of that review, DiFelice said, municipalities were asked to recommend changes to their urban



New homes are being built worth \$409,000 at the Rosewood Estates subdivision in Pelham off Rice Road, while empty fields lie south of the Welcome to Welland sign. The city has asked the Nigara Region to expand its urban area boundary

Club was previously located.

"We could financially bene-

fit by selling that land to devel-

opers. I think that's the most

important part," he said. "If we

can sell that land, and I believe

we could get a large sum of

money for that land, it'll allevi-

ate some of the cost at the sports

complex now that we're losing

He said proceeds from the

property sale could notentially

pay off enough of the city's

\$14.8-million debt for Youngs

Sportsplex on River Road, to

reduce annual mortgage pay-

on an annual basis."

to include northwest Welland. boundaries. DeFelice feels confident that this time the long-awaited

changes in Welland might finally take place.
"This is serviced land, it's close to development in the city of Thorold and in Pelham... and hat is articulated in the report as one of many reasons that the lands should be lincorporated (into the urban boundary)' she

said.

Chiocchio said the boundary change could allow the city to sell some of its property on Rice Road where the Welland Soccer

ments enough to make the facility profitable.

Carl said development in the area might also help alleviate

Carl said development in the area might also help alleviate problems in neighbourhoods surrounding Niagara College. "If you build buildings in areas that are designated for

"If you build buildings in areas that are designated for student housing, that takes the pressure off the neighbourhoods. Students would rather live in a building that is designed for them rather than live in the basement of a semi," Carl said.

basement of a semi," Carl said.
"We need to design and
develop proper areas for students to live in. We want to see
Niagara College be successful,
but students need a place to live

He said there is also enough property in the area to accommodate student housing, as well as residential developments that would blend in well with existing homes.

DeFelice said the Region's municipal comprehensive review, including the requested changes to Welland's urban boundary, should be complete by the end of 2016.

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Investigator for children's aid societies 'a good thing'

KARENA WALTER Postmadia Natural

A new provincial investigative unit overseeing children's aid society matters should be beneficial, says the executive director of Family and Children's Services Niagara. Chris Steven said anything

BOB TYNCZYSZYW/POSTMEDIA NETWORK **Executive director Chris** Steven is pictured in 2013 outside Family and Children's Services Niagara's St. Catharines offices.

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that assists the government and the public in understanding and improving services to

children is a good thing. "We have to have some confidence that our provincial politicians and the govern-

ment have weighed the benefits of this and concluded that this is going to be something that will be helpful in the long run." he said last Thursday.

The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth received legislative authority on March 1 to investigate matters involving individual children and groups of children served by children's aid societies, as well as those placed by a society with a resiantial licensee

Investigations can include child deaths and critical iniu-

A person with a complaint must go through other channels before the office will consider launching an investigation, such as the local children's aid society and the province's Child and Family ervices Review Board

When the provincial advocate's investigative unit takes on a case, it will release a public report with findings and recommendations.

Ann Godfrey, director of development and public relations for FACS Niagara, said the work FACS does is very sensitive and difficult and it's not surprising there are points of contention For us, it's definitely the

commitment to be fair and to be compassionate but at the same time fulfil our obligation to keep kids safe and support families to the best of our ability," she said.

Godfrey said the agency wants to be helpful and supportive of families, but it's also working with the best interests of the children. She said not everybody always agrees on the best way to get to that

"These are big issues in people's lives and we know it's important for people to be heard," she said. "It's important to sort through these matters so everybody feels that they've had a fair hearing and at the end of the day we're able to establish some common goals."

FACS Niagara provides links and websites to clients on how to make complaints.

The majority are handled informally through normal relationships between the families and youth and their case workers or supervisors.

Steven said FACS does examine whether its agency For more information: provincialar/vocate.on.ca Children and youth seeking services can call advocate: 1-800-263-2841

FACS NIAGARA RY THE NUMBERS

4.656 families - number served in 10 months from April 2015 to January 2016 9.626 children - number seen due to concerns about care and safety, but not all found in need of protection

may have to revisit its thinking or decisions on some matter "It would not be correct for

us to think we always have it right and that's the importance of having these processes," he said. FACS Niagara also has a

formal written complaints system, for which an internal panel will review a matter. The panel provides decisions in writing to the complainant.

It can't deal with matters before the courts or interfere in judge's decisions.

Complainants who aren't satisfied with the FACS Niagara panel decision can go to the Child and Family Services Review Board of Ontario. They can also decide to skip the formal process at FACS and go directly to the board, which is based in Toronto but holds

hearings locally

Family and Children's Services Niagara said it received 17 formal internal complaints in 2015. Eleven were resolved at the local level, with some complainants accepting FACS' reasons and others leading FACS to do something differently.

Two of the complaints proceeded to the provincial board and the rest were withdrawn.

"It's a relatively small number given the volume of cases we deal with in a year," Steven said, adding FACS Niagara has 1,500 family files open at any one time and another 500 for children in care. "There are thousands of investigations."

The two complaints that went to the board were joined by 11 others that went directly there, skipping the FACS Niagara internal process. Eight of the 13 were

resolved at the pre-hearing stage, one was not eligible and four are still open. Continued on Page 16



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Investigator for children's aid societies 'a good thing'

From Page 14

Steven said the agency has worked with the office of the provincial advocate for children and youth in the past in its advocacy role. It's led to some good recommendations they've been able to

Steven said the only concern with the new investigative unit is what it will mean for staff time without additional resources if they are involved in an inves-

implement be said.

imition

He said investigations can be very detailed and time- and resource-consuming because of the importance of the work. He questioned if there will be another way of economizing, like being given relief from some of the other oversight mechanisms.

kwalter@postmedia.com

Pandas Canada's Hope and Joy

ALLISON JONES The Canadian Press

TORONTO — A pair of panda cubs born in the Toronto Zoo were hailed as a symbol of international co-operation as they officially received names that pay tribute to the country of their birth. In a ceremony packed with dignitaries including China's ambassador, the

zoo announced the male cub is named Jia Panpan, meaning Canadian Hope, while the female cub is named Jia Yueyue, meaning Canadian Joy. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne were

among those getting the first glimpse of the cubs, who have been held in a special maternity area.

Both posed for photos with the cubs —

an opportunity Trudeau joked his children would envy.

The prime minister tweeted photos of himself cuddling the cubs, but media outlets were not allowed to capture the private visit. A spokeswoman said it was the zoo's idea to give the dignitaries a "unique errerience"

"It was going to be a private (event), we had our photographer there as well who has taken pictures and each of their own photographers," said Jennifer Tracey, senior director of marketing for the Toronto

"Just based on the number of media we had, we knew that we wouldn't be able to accommodate everybody and we had to do it very quick."

The cubs were brought to their outdoor

The cubs were brought to their outdoor exhibit after their names were revealed their first time on display since their birth last October. They played with a ball and nibbled on bamboo in front of dozens of

Trudeau said the pandas represent the growing bond between their host country and China, where they will eventually be returned, noting he had received a message of congratulations from his Chinese counterpart.





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NATIONAL POST

THE TRIBUNE

Dragons' Den auditions in Falls this month

Niagara, start your inventions. Auditions for the 11th season of *Drag*ons' Den will be held March 19 at Scotiabank Convention Centre in Niagara Falls, starting at 11 a.m.

Producers of the CBC show will hear pitches from local entrepreneurs until 6 p.m. in meeting room 208.

The show is nearing the end of its 33-city tour of Canada. Successful applicants will be invited onto the show to face

the scrutiny of the 'Dragons' — five Canadian business moguls seeking to invest in worthy ideas.

Auditions are open to all ages and inventions in any stage of development. Applicants should be prepared to pitch their idea to producers in five minutes or less. They should also apply online and bring their completed application form to the audition.







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